Average earnings guide

Guide to labour statistics

Learn about our average earnings measures and how to use them

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Overview

Average earnings can be represented as either a median or mean value.

While the mean is the most commonly understood measure of average, median measures are most representative of an "average" employee's earnings as earnings data has a positively skewed distribution. The mean is higher than the median value because of a small number of people with very high earnings.

The Earnings guide (/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide) includes information about other earnings measures.

Median weekly earnings

- Most representative measure of the "average" level of earnings.
- Provides the "middle" earnings figure, where half of people earn more than the median earnings value and half earn less than the median earnings value.
- Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes median earnings by age, method of setting pay, employment status, occupation and industry.
- Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes median earnings by education qualification, main and secondary jobs, and working arrangements.
- Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) (and Jobs in Australia (/statistics/labour/jobs/jobs-australia/latest-release)) includes median income estimates for small geographic areas.

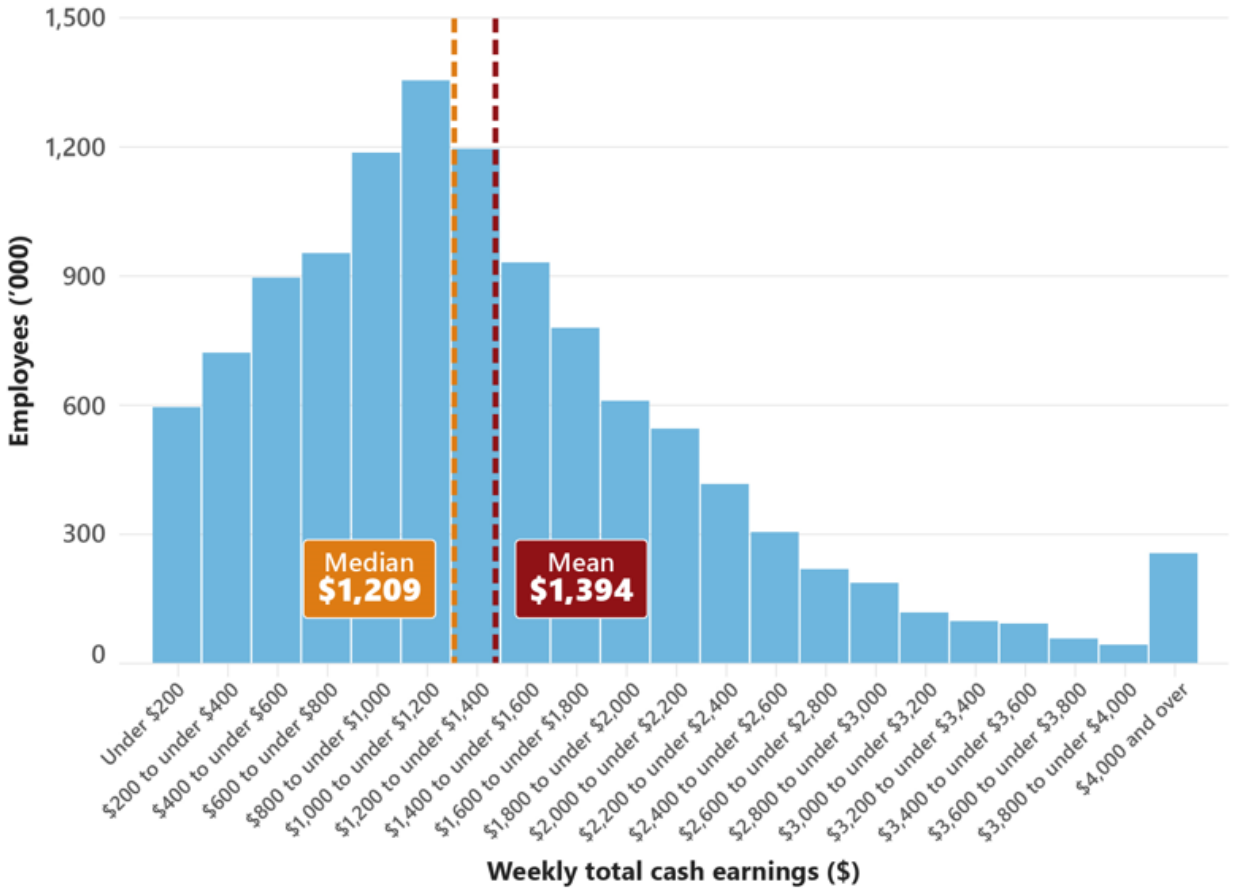
Mean (average) weekly earnings

- The arithmetic average, calculated by dividing total earnings by the total number of people (or employees).
- Often just referred to as average earnings, however they do not represent the earnings of the "average" person.
- Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/average-weekly-earnings-australia/latest-release) includes mean weekly earnings by industry, state/territory and public/private sector.
- Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) includes average hourly total earnings for non-managerial employees in addition to a range of weekly estimates.
  - Managerial employees (more likely to have high earnings) are excluded so these EEH estimates are closer to median measures than estimates from AWE.
- Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) includes mean earnings by education qualification, main and secondary jobs, and working arrangements.
- Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) includes average income estimates for small geographic areas.

Earnings distributions

- Give more detail than average measures by providing information on the range of earnings of the population.
- Refer to the level of earnings at which a certain percentage of people earn more or less than that value.
- For example, 50% of people earn more and 50% earn less than the median (midpoint) value, 75% earn more than the 1st (of 4) quartile and 25% earn less, 10% earn more than the 9th (of ten) decile and 90% earn less.
- Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia/latest-release) provides robust estimates by full-time/part-time status, method of setting pay, occupation and industry.
- Employee earnings (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release) provides earnings distribution data by education qualification, working arrangements and main job.
- Personal Income in Australia (/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/personal-income-australia/latest-release) provides income distributions for small geographic areas.

Distribution of weekly total cash earnings (Original)



Source: [Microdata and TableBuilder: Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia, May 2021 (/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia)](/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/employee-earnings-and-hours-australia)